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ABSTRACT

The social network of elderly blacks was compared with whites in a sample of 241 ambulatory persons interviewed in congregate settings in a planning district of a border Southern state. Questions were asked about monthly patterns of social interaction, such as visiting and phone contacts with children, other kin, neighbors, friends, involvement in group and community activities, patterns of local and non-local travel. Occupation prior to retirement was obtained and used to suggest any social class differences influencing these patterns. Results indicated that: (1) blacks had significantly more contact with children and kin than did the whites; this was true for all social classes (Class I being the highest and Class III the lowest); (2) whites (except Class III) had more contact with neighbors and friends; (3) relative social isolation and lack of social network was experienced by Class III whites and the very rich network of Class I Blacks; and (4) whites were more involved in community and group activities, with church and church groups being the main group involvement of blacks. (Author)

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# A Comparison of the Social Networks of Blacks and Whites In A Sample Of Elderly In A Southern Border State

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Research on the social networks of older people in general has been a topic of considerable research interest by social scientists in recent years. However, social class per se has not often been the primary focus of such investigation; and, the comparison of the social life space of aged blacks and whites along socioeconomic lines has been largely ignored. Also, whereas racial differences in the voluntary association membership and participation of the population as a whole have been studied widely in the past, very little of this study has been specifically addressed to older people. Exceptions include the analysis of racial differences in the participation of black and white aged in voluntary associations in Philadelphia (Clemente, Rexroad, and Hirsch, 1975); and, the social participation of black and white elderly in a national sample (Rubenstein, 1971).

In two research reports on social class living patterns and leisure-time pursuits of retired Negroes in Gainesville, Florida (Lambing, Sept. 1972; Dec., 1972) some reference is made to black-white differences in these patterns; however, no empirical data are provided.

It is clear, then, that there is a need to center some research attention on the entire spectrum of the comparative social networks of elderly blacks and whites as these are distinguished by social class.

This paper presents the findings of an exploratory study of such social class differences in the social life space of blacks and whites in

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a sample of elderly retired persons in three relatively small Tidewater, Virginia communities.

Background Literature

Several studies report some relationships between the social class of older persons and their contacts with children, family, kin, neighbors, and friends; and, also their relative participation in voluntary civic and religious associations, volunteer work, and travel and leisure activities. For a review of this literature see Kernodle and Kernodle (1978). A recent explanatory study by Trela and Jackson (1979) which examines the relationships among the availability of family roles and participation in several dimensions of community life points to a number of positive and negative associations between sex, marital status, family contacts and participation in community life roles. However neither race nor social class of the respondents is controlled for in the study. Only that research which focuses specifically on black-white comparisons in social network patterns will be summarized here since these constitute the central focus of this paper.

Jackson (1971) reported that black and white elderly couples and widows had similar contact patterns with children and other family. Lopata (1973) also found no stronger bond between elderly and widowed blacks and their children or other kin than existed among elderly whites. Also black and white widows had nearly equal contact with their neighbors. Research on resistance to isolation among widows in South Carolina determined that white widows saw more of their children but that black widows knew more of their neighbors (Arling, 1976). In a study of white, Spanish, and black elderly in the inner city of New York (Cantor, 1973)

little difference was found among the three groups in the frequency of visitation contacts from children. Each race-ethnic category saw half of their children at least once a week and two thirds of them at least once a month. Children of whites in the study more frequently lived further away in the suburbs but these children's higher incomes made distance less of a factor in visiting frequency. Spanish and black elderly received more money gifts from their children; whereas, whites were more likely to receive other types of gifts such as coats, refrigerators, tvs, etc. Black and Spanish children did shopping for their parents more then white children did, reflecting their greater distance of the whites to some extent. Children in all three categories were about equal in providing help and attention during times of sickness. Also, Rubenstein (1971) found few differences by race among a national sample of aged in participation with family and kin.

It is not possible to determine whether these family and kinship patterns are functions of race or social class since these studies either did not control for social class or the study populations were all essentially of the same class.

With respect to voluntary associations, civic clubs, volunteer work, etc., some studies report that differences in membership and participation of blacks and whites are a function of social class rather than race. (Heyman-Jeffers, 1964), and others indicate that the only difference in black-white involvements in voluntary associations is with respect to organizational meetings in which blacks were more active than whites. This difference, however, appears to be due primarily to the greater membership and participation of blacks of all social class categories in church services and church related activities. (Arling, 1976); (Heyman,

Jeffers, 1964); (Lambing, 1972); (Clemente, Rexford, and Hircsh); (Kernodle and Kernodle, 1978). Using data from the Kent Study Project of a low socioeconomic status area of Philadelphia, Clemente et. al. (1975) do find that black elderly reported more membership in social or recreation clubs and civic activities than whites; but, less membership in Senior Citizens Clubs and Racial and Ethnic Clubs. This latter difference reflects the high concentration of white ethnic population in the area which was studied. Furthermore the study was restricted primarily to lower class and lower middle class respondents. On the other hand a national sample study (Rubenstein, 1971) showed overall more participation in voluntary associations by whites.

In sum there have been few research investigations on the similarities and differences in the social networks of black and white elderly and the variations by social class. This paper represents an effort to begin such exploration.

## The Study

The data analyzed in this paper come from a study, the main intent of which was to look at relationships between social class and the social life space of the older respondents in the sample. Social life space was measured by the patterned involvements of the respondents in both formal and informal interactions within familial and nonfamilial relationships, in community associations, and in frequencies of shopping, health-related functions, leisure, and travel pursuits.

The data for this study were obtained from questionnaires administered to availability samples of 241 ambulatory older people in the Tidewater

area of Virginia. Congregate settings were used, with an attempt to select those settings that represented different social classes in the area. The groups interviewed included members of an upper middle class men's luncheon group (all white); a retired teachers' association (mixed race); persons in attendance at four nutrition sites, which ranged in type from one in a low income, public housing complex to one in an upper-middle class neighborhood. All of these were racially mixed.

The questionnaire items were designed to obtain basic demographic data on the respondents, to tap the monthly patterns of interpersonal and group interaction of the individuals, their travel patterns, and reasons for travel. Respondents were asked to estimate how many times in the past month they had engaged in each of 28 different patterns of personal and social interaction. These variables, after being analyzed individually, were aggregated into patterns, (e.g., visits to and from children).

The sample was divided into three classes, using census categories based on occupation before retirement, or occupation of spouse in the case of never employed or sporadically employed females. Class I consists of those listing professional, managerial, administrative, or military officer occupations; Class II of sales, clerical, craftsmen, operators; Class III of laborers, farm laborers, service workers, and household workers.

This study can only be considered suggestive because it is not a probability sample and is confined to those found in congregate settings. Although an effort was made to secure a sample which was representative of the racial and social class categories in the area, Class II is somewhat underrepresented and Class III is proportionately overrepresented. Blacks are also somewhat more overrepresented. The numbers in each of the sub-samples (e.g., Class II whites) is small and findings again should be used

only as suggestive and indicative of further research.

This paper looks at those variables which relate to social networks to see first of all if there are differences in these patterns between blacks and whites of this sample and then any social class differences that emerge. Much of the research of the past decade analyzing social networks of the elderly has been urban in location and for blacks would likely represent a high proportion of in-migrants. The sample in this study includes a relatively stable black population with a history of residence in the area; and a white population, particularly Class I, more apt to be in-migrants.

The variables used to define the social network are: visits to and from children, total contacts with children (including visits, phone and mail contacts), visits to and from other relatives; total contacts with other relatives; visits to and from neighbors; visits to and from friends; total phone contacts; club membership and attendance; and all group contacts (club attendance, church attendance, volunteer activities).

## Description of the Sample

Of the 241 persons in the sample, 128 were white and 111 black. The black sample is 81% female as compared with 66% of the white sample. This reflects the differential death rate for males and females, blacks and white, and also the findings of previous research which indicates the reluctance of males, particularly blue collar and lower class, to participate in cross sex group activities such as nutrition centers.

A much larger percentage of the white sample (45%) is married, compared with 30% of the black sample. A higher proportion of the blacks in the study were widowed, divorced, or separated. A similar number of both

races (7%) were single.

The distribution of whites and blacks by social class shows whites with 58% in Class I as compared to 18% of blacks, while 69% of Class III blacks are in Class III as compared with only 14% of whites.

A look at the variable "Residence Prior to Retirement" indicates that the overwhelming proportion of blacks still live in the same area that they did prior to retirement. There were 68% who lived in the same place and an additional 15% in the same area but in a different home; or, a total of 83% who lived in the area prior to retirement. (Ninety percent of Class I blacks did so). This compared with 59% of whites who lived in the area prior to retirement. Several locations included in the study have become very popular retirement communities, particularly for upper middle class whites. The data here reflect this, showing that more than 40 percent of the whites in the study had moved to the area following their retirement. The blacks in the sample, on the other hand, reflect that employment opportunities for blacks for some years have been favorable with the presence of a large tourist industry, government establishments, and several shipyards, thus retarding the heavy out-migration of blacks experienced by many other Southern locations.

There is not much difference between blacks and whites in the percentage who live alone (33.6% of whites and 28.8% of blacks) but a higher percentage of whites live with a spouse (45% whites and 32% of blacks) while a higher percentage of blacks live with "Other" (36% of blacks compared with 22% of whites). "Other" would include children, relatives, and non-relatives. Only 12.5% of whites live in the same home with one or more children while 28.8% of blacks do so. Blacks are also much more likely to be living in a household with other relatives (28.8%) as compared with only 9.9% of whites.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE, BY WHITE AND BLACK

| | White (N=128) | Black (N=111) |
|---|---|---|
| By Sex | Percent | |
| Male | 34.4 | 18.9 |
| Female | 65.6 | 81.1 |
| By Marital Status | | |
| Married | 45.3 | 29.7 |
| Widowed | 45.3 | 59.5 |
| Divorced or Separated | 1.6 | 3.6 |
| Single | 7.0 | 7.2 |
| Unknown | 0.8 | 0 |
| By Social Class * | | |
| Class I | 57.8 | 18.0 |
| Class II | 28.1 | 12.6 |
| Class III | 14.1 | 69.4 |
| By Residence Prior to Retirement | | |
| Same as now | 40.6 | 67.6 |
| Elsewhere in the same area | 18.0 | 15.3 |
| Out of Area but in Virginia | 6.3 | 0.9 |
| Neighboring State | 7.0 | 1.8 |
| Northeast | 14.1 | 6.3 |
| South | 3.9 | 3.6 |
| Midwest | 6.3 | 0 |
| West of Mississippi | 2.3 | 1.8 |
| Unknown | 0.8 | 2.7 |
| Who Lives With | | |
| Alone | 33.6 | 28.8 |
| With Wife | 29.7 | 10.8 |
| With Husband | 14.8 | 20.7 |
| With Other | 21.9 | 36.0 |
| Unknown | 0 | 3.7 |
| Number of Children in Home | | |
| None | 87.5 | 71.2 |
| One | 10.2 | 20.7 |
| Two or More | 2.3 | 8.1 |
| Number Relatives in Home | | |
| None | 89.1 | 71.2 |
| One | 7.8 | 16.2 |
| Two or More | 3.1 | 12.6 |
| Number Others in Home | | |
| None | 96.9 | 95.5 |
| One or More | 3.1 | 4.5 |

* Class I - Professional, managerial, administrative, military officer
Class II- sales, clerical, craftsmen, operators, enlisted military
Class III- laborers, farm laborers, service workers, household workers

Only a very small percentage of blacks or whites lived in a household with anyone other than children or other relatives.

From these data it is apparent that, first of all, there is a difference in the main "web" of the social network comparing blacks and whites. Whites tend to live in households where the spouse is the main person; whereas, blacks are more apt to live with children and other relatives.

## Findings

### Total Sample By Race

Table 2 presents the monthly patterns of social interaction of the respondents, by race. This includes the mean number of times during the past month (prior to the interview) that a respondent engaged in each of the presented social interactions. Also given is the standard deviation from the mean which shows that there is a great variation in the sample. The frequencies in each variable were then divided into categories of "none," "low," and "high," and, the percentage of the respondents in each of these categories is given.

### Family and Kin Networks

In all four of the variables dealing with kin contacts (visits to and from children, all contacts with children, visits to and from relatives, all contacts with relatives, and total kin contacts) the mean for the blacks in the sample is much higher than for the whites. Also interesting is that the standard deviation for all of these variations is much greater for blacks than whites.

A surprising 46% of whites and 35% of blacks reported no visits with their children during the preceding month (a month, incidentally, which

did not include a major holiday). This figure is, of course higher than previously reported research. This figure also includes those in the sample who do not have any children. For the original purpose of this research this question had not been important, but for this analysis it must be noted and certainly does have some effect. Also contributing to the white figure is the fact that only 59% of them lived in the area prior to retirement (as compared with 83% of blacks) and thus quite probably their children reside in other regions of the country. Other contributing factors may be that many children of both blacks and whites have migrated to other areas for job purposes. However, of importance are the data which show that fewer blacks report no visits or no contacts with children than do whites; and, more blacks are in the "high" category (35% of blacks and 23% of whites) in visits to and from children and in all contacts with children (45% of blacks and 33% of whites).

Whites also appear to have less contact with other relatives in that 53% report no visiting with relatives as compared with only 35% of blacks. Blacks also report a higher percentage in the "high" category (33% as compared with 16% for whites). Only 14% of whites and 11% of blacks report no contact with relatives but again 51% of blacks are in the "high" category of contacts as compared with 40% of whites.

The difference between visiting patterns for both children and other relatives and all contacts (including visits, phone, and mail) does indicate that families, even though they may not visit, do keep in touch with one another by phone and mail (though there was very little mail contact reported by this sample).

Non-Kin Networks

There is much less difference between blacks and whites in the means

TABLE 2. MONTHLY PATTERNS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION, BY RACE

| Monthly Pattern Of Social Interaction | Mean | S.D. | Percent None | Low | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | White N=128 | | | | |
| Visits to and from Children | 3.8 | 5.9 | 46.1 | 30.5 | 23.4 |
| All Contacts with Children * | 11.3 | 13.0 | 25.0 | 42.2 | 32.8 |
| Visits to and from Relatives | 2.5 | 5.0 | 53.0 | 29.7 | 16.4 |
| All Contacts with Relatives * | 8.8 | 11.1 | 14.1 | 46.1 | 39.8 |
| Total Kin Contacts * | 21.8 | 18.0 | 3.9 | 58.6 | 37.5 |
| Visits to and from Neighbors | 14.0 | 16.9 | 12.5 | 33.6 | 53.9 |
| Visits to and from Friends | 7.0 | 9.3 | 18.0 | 34.4 | 47.7 |
| Total Non-Kin Contacts * | 39.2 | 32.1 | 0.0 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| Clubs Active In | 2.2 | 1.7 | 16.4 | 44.5 | 39.1 |
| Total Group Contacts ** | 11.0 | 8.2 | 4.7 | 46.9 | 48.4 |
| | Black N=111 | | | | |
| Visits to and from Children | 13.5 | 20.6 | 35.1 | 29.7 | 35.1 |
| All Contacts with Children * | 22.9 | 28.6 | 20.7 | 34.2 | 45.0 |
| Visits to and from Relatives | 6.0 | 11.1 | 36.0 | 30.6 | 33.3 |
| All Contacts with Relatives * | 14.6 | 17.2 | 10.8 | 37.8 | 51.4 |
| Total Kin Contacts * | 38.2 | 35.1 | 2.7 | 42.3 | 55.0 |
| Visits to and from Neighbors | 13.8 | 18.8 | 17.1 | 40.5 | 42.3 |
| Visits to and from Friends | 5.3 | 7.6 | 23.4 | 41.4 | 35.1 |
| Total Non-Kin Contacts * | 39.1 | 34.0 | 1.8 | 50.5 | 47.7 |
| Clubs Active In | 1.6 | 1.4 | 24.3 | 48.7 | 35.2 |
| Total Group Contacts ** | 10.3 | 12.0 | 5.4 | 53.2 | 41.4 |

* Includes visits, phone, and mail.
** Includes club and church attendance, volunteer work.

of the variables reporting visiting patterns with neighbors and friends, and total non-kin contacts (including phone as well as visits). However, a higher percentage of blacks than whites in each of these variables report "None." Twelve percent of whites as compared with 17% of blacks report no visits to and from neighbors; 18% of whites and 23% of blacks report no visiting patterns with friends. However, no whites and only 1.8% of blacks report no non-kin contacts, which indicates that virtually all respondents had some non-kin social network. (A slightly higher percentage of each race report no kin contact than no non-kin contact).

Blacks use the phone to "keep in touch" more frequently than do the whites of the sample, having a mean of 32 calls during the month, compared with 24 for whites. The mean number of phone contacts was higher for blacks for calls with children, kin, and neighbors; but they had fewer phone contacts with friends than did whites.

Also included in one's social network is participation in organizations. The white members of the sample were more active in group organizations, being active in a mean of 2.2 clubs as compared with 1.6 for blacks. It should be noted that except for a few Class I blacks, that black organization participation is almost exclusively connected with their church affiliation. (Lambing 1972, Heyman, Jeffers 1964, etc.) There is little difference in the mean number of group contacts (including church attendance, attendance at clubs/organizations, participation in volunteer work) but here again the difference is that blacks participated almost exclusively in church related activities; whereas, whites were more varied in their organizational activities. However, in terms of a viable social network of organized activities there is little difference in the extent of participation by blacks and whites.

Variation By Social Class

Inspection of the race/social class subsamples provide some suggestions for future research. The research reported in this paper can only be suggestive but does indicate some patterns that should be pursued. As pointed out earlier the sample was divided into three classes using basic census categories.

Table 3 presents the comparative monthly patterns of social interaction by race and social class, broken into three frequency categories: None, Low, and High.

The percentage reporting no visits with children is higher for whites of all three classes than for blacks of any of the three classes. Class III whites report 55.6% having no visits to or from children during the preceding month. Class I whites reported 46% with none and Class II whites 41.7% with none. On the other hand, only 30% of Class I blacks reported no visits with children, with Class III the highest with 36.4%. Class III whites had only 5.6% in the "high" category of visits with children while Class I blacks had 45% in the same category and Class I whites had only 23%.

When phone and mail contacts with children are added to visits, all subsamples show much more contact with children. However, Class III whites still show the highest percentage (38.9) with no contact. There is little difference in the percent reporting no contact with the other subsamples (running around 22%) except for Class II blacks reporting only 7.1%. Blacks, in each category, report a higher percentage having "high" contact, as do Class II whites. Class III whites, followed by Class I whites have only 27.8% and 29.7% in the high contact category.

Class III whites which had the highest percentage (55.6) with no visits to or from children and only 5.6% in the high category shows a similar

TABLE 3. MONTHLY PATTERNS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION OF RESPONDENTS, BY RACE AND SOCIAL CLASS (In Percents)

| Monthly Patterns of Social Interaction | None | Low | High | None | Low | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Class I | | | |
| | White (N=74) | | | Black (N=20) | | |
| Visits to and from Children | 45.9 | 31.1 | 23.0 | 30.0 | 25.0 | 45.0 |
| All Contacts with Children * | 23.0 | 47.3 | 29.7 | 20.0 | 25.0 | 55.0 |
| Visits to and from Relatives | 44.6 | 37.8 | 17.6 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 60.0 |
| All Contacts with Relatives * | 8.1 | 44.6 | 47.3 | 5.0 | 20.0 | 75.0 |
| Total Kin Contacts * | 4.1 | 60.8 | 35.1 | 0 | 25.0 | 75.0 |
| Visits to and from Neighbors | 9.5 | 31.1 | 59.5 | 10.0 | 35.0 | 55.0 |
| Visits to and from Friends | 12.2 | 31.1 | 56.8 | 20.0 | 35.0 | 45.0 |
| Total Non-kin Contacts * | 0 | 47.3 | 52.7 | 0 | 40.0 | 60.0 |
| Number Clubs Active In | 4.1 | 45.9 | 50.0 | 15.0 | 30.0 | 55.0 |
| Total Group Contacts ** | 1.4 | 50.0 | 48.6 | 5.0 | 30.0 | 65.0 |
| | | | Class II | | | |
| | White (N=36) | | | Black (N=14) | | |
| Visits to and from Children | 41.7 | 25.0 | 33.3 | 35.7 | 35.7 | 28.6 |
| All Contacts with Children * | 22.2 | 36.1 | 41.7 | 7.1 | 42.9 | 50.0 |
| Visits to and from Relatives | 63.9 | 22.2 | 13.9 | 64.3 | 14.3 | 21.4 |
| All Contacts with Relatives * | 22.2 | 52.8 | 25.0 | 21.4 | 36.7 | 42.9 |
| Total Kin Contacts * | 5.6 | 55.6 | 38.9 | 0 | 64.3 | 35.7 |
| Visits to and from Neighbors | 8.3 | 36.1 | 55.6 | 14.3 | 42.9 | 42.9 |
| Visits to and from Friends | 25.0 | 36.1 | 38.9 | 21.4 | 50.0 | 28.6 |
| Total Non-kin Contacts * | 0 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 7.1 | 64.3 | 28.6 |
| Number Clubs Active In | 27.8 | 44.4 | 27.8 | 28.6 | 35.7 | 35.7 |
| Total Group Contacts ** | 5.6 | 44.4 | 50.0 | 7.1 | 64.3 | 28.6 |
| | | | Class III | | | |
| | White (N=18) | | | Black (N=77) | | |
| Visits to and from Children | 55.6 | 38.9 | 5.6 | 36.4 | 29.9 | 33.8 |
| All Contacts with Children * | 38.9 | 33.3 | 27.8 | 23.4 | 35.1 | 41.6 |
| Visits to and from Relatives | 72.2 | 11.1 | 16.7 | 35.1 | 36.4 | 28.6 |
| All Contacts with Relatives * | 22.2 | 38.9 | 38.9 | 10.4 | 42.9 | 46.8 |
| Total Kin Contacts * | 0 | 55.6 | 44.4 | 3.9 | 42.9 | 53.2 |
| Visits to and from Neighbors | 33.3 | 38.9 | 27.8 | 19.5 | 41.6 | 39.0 |
| Visits to and from Friends | 27.8 | 44.4 | 27.8 | 24.7 | 41.6 | 33.8 |
| Total Non-kin Contacts * | 0 | 61.1 | 38.9 | 1.3 | 50.6 | 48.1 |
| Number Clubs Active In | 44.4 | 38.9 | 16.7 | 26.0 | 58.4 | 15.6 |
| Total Group Contacts ** | 16.7 | 38.9 | 44.4 | 5.2 | 57.1 | 37.7 |

* Includes visits, phone calls, and mail.

** Includes club and church organizations, church attendance, volunteer work.

pattern in visits and other contacts with relatives, being much lower than any other subsample. Seventy two percent of Class III whites report no visits with relatives. This is followed by Class II blacks (64.3% and Class II whites with 63.9%). Class III blacks report the lowest percentage with no visits with relatives (20%). They also have the highest percentage who have "high" patterns of visiting (60%). Class II whites (13.9%) and Class III whites (16.7%) have the smallest percentage with "high" patterns of relative visiting.

As with the variables reporting patterns of interaction with children, more respondents in each subsample report a higher level of interaction with relatives when phone and mail contacts are added to visits and a smaller percentage report no contacts. Class I blacks (5%) and Class I whites (8%) have the smallest percentage with no relative contacts. They likewise have the highest percentage in the "high" category with Class I blacks reporting 75% in this category. This is followed by Class I whites (47%) and Class III blacks (47%). It is Class II whites that have the lowest percentage in "high" (25%), a percentage much lower than any other subsample.

The total kin contacts category aggregates all of the preceding variables and clearly shows that very few of the sample had no contacts at all with any kin during the preceding month. The pattern of "high" contact again shows Class I blacks (75%) having by far the most total contact and Class I whites having the least (35.1%).

Neighbors and friends also constitute an important part of one's social network. Class III whites, who reported fewer patterns of social interaction with children and relatives, again report less contact with neighbors and friends than any of the other subsamples, with 33% having no visits to and from neighbors and 28% reporting none with friends. It is interesting that

in all the subsamples a much smaller percentage reports no visiting patterns with neighbors and friends than with their children and other relatives, which indicates the importance of neighbors and friends in the older individual's social network. Class I whites, Class I blacks, and Class II whites have the smallest percentage with no visiting patterns with neighbors. Here again, Class III whites have a much smaller percentage with "high" visiting patterns with neighbors than any other subsample. Class I whites have the highest in this respect. In visiting patterns to and from friends, Class I whites have much the lowest percentage with no interaction (12%) with all other subsamples showing little variance (in twenty percent range). Class III whites have the lowest percentage in "high" category with Class I whites and Class I blacks having the highest.

The variable "All Non-kin Contacts" aggregates all of the variables dealing with neighbors and friends and adds phone calls and mail contacts to these visits. Only Class II blacks (7%) and Class III blacks (1%) report no non-kin contact whatsoever. But again it is Class II blacks (29%) and Class III whites who have the lowest percentage reporting "high" contacts (39%). Class I blacks (60%) and Class I whites (53%) have the highest percentages in the "high" category.

Participation in clubs and organizations adds another dimension to a person's social network. The respondents were asked to list the number of clubs and organizations they were <u>active in</u> (not just members of). Only 4% of Class I whites were not active in any organization, followed by 15% of Class I blacks. Class III whites have, by far, the highest percentage (44%) not active in any organization. There is a direct relationship between social class, regardless of race, and "high" percentage of participation in

organizations, ranging from 50% for Class I whites and 55% for Class I blacks to 17% for Class III whites and 16% for Class III blacks. Also there is a relationship between social class and type of organization participated in with the lower the social class, the more apt it is to be church related and the higher the social class the more varied the type of organization (retirement clubs, cultural and civic clubs, etc.).

The variable "Total Group Contacts" measures attendance at organization meetings, church attendance, participation in volunteer activities, etc. For each subsample, a very small percentage (ranging from 1.4% for Class I whites to 7.1% for Class II blacks) report no participation except that Class III whites show 17% reporting no group involvement at all. For Class II and III blacks this is very apt to be church related activities. Class II blacks have the lowest percentage in the "high" category (29%) with class I blacks being most active (65%).

## Summary and Conclusions

The blacks in this sample had quite a bit more contact with their children and other kin than did the whites. Whites had slightly more contacts with neighbors and friends, particularly friends. Whites had a higher level of visiting with neighbors and friends but blacks seemed to use the phone more often to maintain contact, especially with neighbors.

The whites in the sample were somewhat more active in group activities and it was more varied in type of activity and organization while black group participation was predominantly with the church.

When the variables defining the social network are inspected for differences by social class, even though the subsamples are too small to be

anything but suggestive, some differing patterns emerge by class as well as by race. Another important variable of influence here is residence prior to retirement. The full social network of, especially Class I blacks, and to a lesser extent Class III blacks might also be explained on the basis of the high percentage having prior residence in the area before retirement. This variable was examined and there was little difference in the patterns of Class I black or white when controlled for prior residence. However, for Class II and Class III black and white, prior residence did have some effect on the social network with prior residence associated with higher involvement.

The main pattern that emerges is that Class III whites have an unusually impoverished social network, having the highest percent with no visits with children, with relatives, with neighbors, with friends, with no organizational participation, and no group contacts. This Class III white subsample came from two locations predominantly; one in which the whites of this subsample continued to live in a neighborhood that was transitional and deteriorating; and, a second location in which a small number of whites lived in a predominantly black housing project. The low income of this group constrained other living options and decreased what they perceived as their social life space.

The second major pattern is the very full social network of the Class I blacks and to a somewhat lesser extend the Class III blacks. Both had a high percentage of their groups still living in the area they lived in prior to retirement. Although Class I blacks maintained separate residences they were in close contact with children, other kin, neighbors, friends, and active in organized groups. Class III blacks had the smallest percent living alone of any subgroup and the largest percentage living

with "other", which was almost exclusively children and other kin. Their patterns of visiting with children and other kin were "high" but with non-kin this was not so. In other words, Class III blacks had much contact with children and other kin but less with non-kin.

Class I whites, with its relatively high percentage of in-migrants indicate a social network that depends more on friends, neighbors and organizational contacts than on children and kin. Class II whites similarly seem to depend more on neighbors and friends, but not on organizational contacts, and less on children and relatives.

Class II blacks, although not nearly as socially isolated as Class III whites, seems to have a somewhat impoverished social network with less friends, neighbors, and organizational contacts and a tendency to a "low" involvement with children and kin.

The indications coming from this sample seem to indicate that Class I blacks and whites have adequate social networks of a somewhat different nature but that Class III whites have a significantly impoverished social network possibly because of being financially unable to determine their living environment.

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